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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-07 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SP-01 PRS-01 L-02 PM-03 DRC-01 /051 W
---------- 016104
R 141805Z MAY 74
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2521
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION BERLIN
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BONN 07739

LIMDIS

DAMASCUS, TEL AVIV, JERUSALEM FOR THE SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, GW
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH ACTING CHANCELLOR SCHEEL

1. SUMMARY: IN A CONVERSATION ON MAY 14, ACTING CHANCELLOR SCHEEL REVIEWED THE BACKGROUND OF RECENT EVENTS IN BONN AND EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE CONFIDENCE REGARDING THE PROSPECTS FOR THE NEW SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT. HE GAVE A GENERALLY COMPLIMENTARY ASSESSMENT OF GENSCHER'S POTENTIAL AS FOREIGN MINISTER. END SUMMARY

2. I HAD A LONG CONVERSATION TODAY WITH FOREIGN MINISTER AND ACTING CHANCELLOR SCHEEL, WHO TOMORROW FULLY EXPECTS TO BE ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL
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REPUBLIC. WHEN I BEGAN BY SAYING THAT I WAS NOT QUITE

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SURE WHETHER ANTICIPATORY CONGRATULATIONS WERE IN ORDER, HE LAUGHED AND SAID THERE HAD BEEN SOME MOMENTS DURING RECENT DAYS WHEN HE HAD HAD HIS DOUBTS. THE STARTLING DEVELOPMENTS CONNECTED WITH BRANDT'S RESIGNATION HAD LED TO A PERIOD OF FRENZIED POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN PARTY LEADERS, BUT HE WAS NOW ABLE TO CONFIRM THAT FULL AGREEMENT HAD NOW BEEN REACHED BETWEEN SCHEEL, MISCHNICK AND GENSCHER ACTING FOR THE FDP, AND SCHMIDT, WEHNER AND KOHN ACTING FOR THE SPD. MEMBERSHIP OF THE CABINET WAS NOW SETTLED (IT WAS THE SEVENTH FORMATION OF THE CABINET IN WHICH HE HAD PARTICIPATED, SCHEEL NOTED), AND THE FDP WAS FULLY SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS. THE SAME COULD BE SAID OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE SPD, ALTHOUGH SUPPORTERS OF THOSE WHO WOULD NO LONGER BE IN THE CABINET WERE OBVIOUSLY NOT VERY HAPPY.

3. WITH SOME HUMOR, SCHEEL OBSERVED THAT THE ROLE IN WHICH HE FOUND HIMSELF AS ACTING CHANCELLOR, BY DESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT HEINEMANN, WOULD PROVIDE A FIELD DAY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL LAWYERS AND HISTORIANS, SINCE THERE WAS NO PROVISION IN THE BASIC LAW FOR SUCH A POSITION. THE EXPECTATION UNDER THE BASIC LAW WAS THAT THE OUTGOING CHANCELLOR WOULD NORMALLY CONDUCT BUSINESS DURING ANY INTERIM PERIOD. BRANDT'S DECISION TO DEPART SUDDENLY FROM OFFICE HAD NECESSITATED IMPROVISATION. ON THE WHOLE, SCHEEL CONTINUED, THE TRANSITION AND THE RELATIVELY EXPEDITIOUS FORMATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN A GOOD TEST OF DEMOCRACY IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC, AND HE THOUGHT THE RESULTS HIGHLY SATISFACTORY. FROM THE FDP POINT OF VIEW, THE PARTY HAD BEEN LUCKY TO HAVE A TEAM OF STRONG MINISTERS. ALL OF THEM HAD BEEN RELATIVELY SUCCESSFUL IN OFFICE SINCE 1972. THERE WERE NO "WEAK SISTERS" WHOSE RETENTION COULD NOT BE JUSTIFIED ON THE BASIS OF MERIT.

4. SCHEEL THEN RAN THROUGH THE NEW CABINET (STILL NOT OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED, OF COURSE). IN ADDITION TO THE NAMES ALREADY REPORTED IN BONN 7640, SCHEEL SAID

THAT MAIHOFER WOULD TAKE OVER THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, HELMUT ROHDE THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION INSTEAD OF DOHNANYI, AND KURT GSCHEIDEL THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT. HE CONFIRMED REPORTS THAT EGON BAHR WILL DEFINITELY NOT BE IN THE NEW CABINET, SINCE BOTH MINISTERS-WITHOUT-PORTFOLIO ARE BEING ELIMINATED; HE WILL APPARENTLY HAVE SIMPLY THE STATUS OF MEMBER OF THE BUNDESTAG-

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5. ACCORDING TO SCHEEL, PUBLIC REACTION TO RECENT
EVENTS HAS TENDED TO FAVOR THE COALITION, AND RESULTS
OF POLLS TAKEN OVER THE WEEKEND HAD SHOWN A SWING
TOWARDS ITS SUPPORT, AND THERE WAS DEFINITELY A WAVE
OF SYMPATHY FOR BRANDT. THE CDU WAS OBVIOUSLY WORRIED
ABOUT THIS TREND, AND CDU PARTY CHAIRMAN HELMUT KOHL

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INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-07 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SP-01 PRS-01 L-02 PM-03 DRC-01 /051 W
---------- 016167
R 141805Z MAY 74
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2522
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
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HAD REALISTICALLY TAKEN THIS INTO ACCOUNT IN A VERY
CLEVERLY DRAFTED LETTER WHICH HE HAD SENT, DISSOCIATING
HIMSELF FROM ANY CAMPAIGN OF SLANDER.

6. SCHEEL THOUGHT THAT THE PROSPECTS FOR A NEW IMAGE
FOR THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT WERE VERY GOOD. CONTRASTED
WITH PREVIOUS CRITICISM THAT THE BRANDT GOVERNMENT HAD
BEEN INACTIVE AND UNABLE TO TAKE DECISIONS, SCHMIDT
WOULD CERTAINLY DEMONSTRATE A CAPACITY FOR MOVEMENT

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AND RAPID DECISION-MAKING. THE CDU WILL HAVE A HARD TIME KEEPING UP WITH HIM, AND SCHEEL FELT THAT THE IMPRESSION OF NEW VITALITY AND INITIATIVE IN COPING WITH PROBLEMS WILL BEGIN TO BE REFLECTED IN INCREASED ELECTORAL SUCCESS FOR THE FDP AND SPD IN FORTHCOMING LAND ELECTIONS.

7. AS FAR AS SCHMIDT'S HEALTH WAS CONCERNED, SCHEEL
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ADMITTED THIS HAD BEEN A PROBLEM IN THE PAST, BUT HE NOW FELT THE DOCTORS HAD DISCOVERED A WAY TO KEEP HIS THYROID CONDITION UNDER CONTROL THROUGH A COMBINATION OF DIET AND DRUGS. AS HE HAD OBSERVED SCHMIDT IN RECENT MONTHS, THE NERVOUSNESS AND HYPER-ACTIVITY OF EARLIER BAD PERIODS SEEMED COMPLETELY ABSENT.

8. SCHEEL SAID THAT HE KNEW THAT THE NEW FOREIGN MINISTER, GENSCHER, WAS NO STRANGER TO THE EMBASSY. WHAT WAS PROBABLY NOT SO MUCH APPRECIATED WAS THAT, OVER THE YEARS, HE HAD ACTUALLY SHOWN A CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN EASTERN POLICY, AND HAD IN FACT BEEN SCHEEL'S STRONG RIGHT ARM WITHIN THE CABINET DURING THE PERIOD OF DEBATE OVER WHETHER PROGRESS ON THE EASTERN TREATIES WAS TO BE LINKED WITH COMPLETION OF THE FOUR POWER AGREEMENT ON BERLIN. THERE HAD BEEN STRONG OPPOSITION AGAINST THIS "JUNKTIM" WITHIN THE CABINET, BUT THE SCHEEL-GENSCHER VIEW HAD PREVAILED. AS SOMEONE BORN AND RAISED IN THE EASTERN PART OF GERMANY, GENSCHER COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO HAVE THE SAME EMOTIONAL COMMITMENT TO WESTERN EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AS HE (SCHEEL), A BORN RHINELANDER, HAD, BUT GENSCHER'S POSITION ON THE THREE MAIN COMPONENTS OF GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY: THE ATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP, THE WEST EUROPEAN RELATIONSHIP, AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS, WAS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME AS HIS. IN SCHEEL'S VIEW, SCHMIDT WOULD DEVOTE AT LEAST THE INITIAL PERIOD OF HIS CHANCELLORSHIP LARGELY TO INTERNAL MATTERS, BUT WITH HIS STRONG BACKGROUND IN INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AND DEFENSE AFFAIRS HE WOULD OBVIOUSLY MAINTAIN AN INTEREST IN FOREIGN POLICY.

9. SCHEEL CONFIRMED THAT STATE SEC. FRANK WOULD FOLLOW HIM TO THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO BECOME SENIOR STATE SECRETARY IN THE GERMAN GOVT. HIS REPLACEMENT WAS NOT YET FINALLY DECIDED, BUT GENSCHER WOULD PROBABLY ACCEPT GEHLHOF (PRESENTLY FRG AMBASSADOR TO THE UN). PARLIAMENTARY STATE SECRETARY MOERSCH WOULD STAY ON, BUT APEL, WHO WOULD BECOME MINISTER OF FINANCE, WOULD BE REPLACED AS THE SECOND PARLIAMENTARY STATE SEC. BY

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SEC. POSITION IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY.

10. IN HIS PROGRAMMATIC SPEECH TO THE BUNDESTAG ON FRIDAY, ACCORDING TO SCHEEL, SCHMIDT INTENDED TO BE RELATIVELY BRIEF (BY GERMAN STANDARDS, THAT IS). HE

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NSAE-00 RSC-01 SP-01 PRS-01 L-02 PM-03 DRC-01 /051 W
---------- 016236
R 141805Z MAY 74
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2523
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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WOULD BASE HIS PLAN OF ACTION ON THE 1972 PLATFORM OF THE COALITION, BUT WOULD REALISTICALLY POINT OUT WHICH ITEMS WERE SUBJECTS FOR SPEEDY IMPLEMENTATION

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AND WHICH OTHERS WOULD HAVE TO AWAIT MORE PROPITIOUS TIMES OR FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR REALIZATION. THE TONE OF SCHMIDT'S REMARKS, SCHEEL ADDED, WOULD BE RATHER LIKE THAT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF A SUBSIDIARY COMPANY REPORTING TO THE BOARD OF THE MOTHER COMPANY. IN OTHER WORDS, HE WOULD BE CAUTIOUS, FACTUAL AND CAREFUL TO AVOID PROMISES WHICH COULD NOT BE FULFILLED.

11. COMMENT: AFTER THE STRENUOUS AND HECTIC POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE PAST TEN DAYS IN WHICH HE HAS PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE, SCHEEL IS NOW OBVIOUSLY LOOKING FORWARD TO THE HOLIDAY WHICH HE EXPECTS TO TAKE BEFORE ASSUMING THE FEDERAL PRESIDENCY ON JULY 1.
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WHILE STILL OBVIOUSLY REGRETFUL IN PERSONAL TERMS THAT BRANDT'S POLITICAL DEMISE CAME SO RAPIDLY AND SO UNEXPECTEDLY, HE CANNOT HELP BUT BE BUOYED BY THE THOUGHT THAT THE NEW SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT MAY WELL PROJECT A BETTER IMAGE AND ACCOMPLISH MORE THAN ITS PREDECESSOR. WHEN HE MOVES ON TO THE PRESIDENCY, HE CAN FEEL THAT HIS POLITICAL HERITAGE WILL BE ONE OF THE BASIS OF WHICH HIS PARTY CAN LOOK AHEAD TO CONTINUED SURVIVAL AND PERHAPS EVEN GROWTH OF STRENGTH IN THE 1976 FEDERAL ELECTIONS. WHETHER THIS SOMEWHAT EUPHORIC MOOD WILL LONG SURVIVE THE HARSH REALITIES WITH WHICH THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE TO GRAPPLE IS ANOTHER QUESTION. CERTAINLY, SCHMIDT WILL TRY TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF GREAT ENERGY AND DECISIVENESS, AND THIS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY SERVE TO IMPROVE THE SOMEWHAT STAGNANT ATMOSPHERE IN BONN WHICH THE MORE PASSIVE BRANDT GOVERNMENT HAD SEEMED TO GENERATE. ON THE WHOLE, THE CABINET CHANGES WILL RESULT IN THE ELIMINATION OF SOME MEDIOCRE MINISTERS AND BRING SOME NEW PERSONALITIES TO THE FORE WHO ARE BOTH YOUNG AND DEMONSTRABLY MORE ABLE.
HILLENBRAND

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